

Richard Lueders Testimony on HB 4730

Committee on Regulatory Reform

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

327 House Office Building

Good morning Madam Chairwoman and Committee members. My name is Richard Lueders. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

Tom was my son. Last year, he and I decided to take a trip together to enjoy a little father-son holiday bonding. But what should have been a great time, turned into a nightmare.

We both led pretty hectic lives. He was a young professional working for a lobbying firm in Washington; I work for DTE Energy Company in Detroit. This was a chance for us to get away together, away from the daily grind.

On the morning of December 27th, both of us woke up excited about the day ahead. Tom had gone out to get a Coke and a juice for me and when he came back, we chatted a little about our plans for the day and who was going to take the first shower. He let me go first.

My last vision of Tom is of him lying on the bed, reading a book. I remember falling in the shower, and then I think I tried to get up, and that was pretty much when the lights went out.

One thing that you should know is that exposure to lethal levels of carbon monoxide first robs you of all cognitive thought. Many people might say this couldn't happen to me. I would feel something. I would do something to get away. But it's not like that.

In fact, the last thought I had as I crashed through the shower curtain and hit the bathroom floor, was... how funny... that was stupid of me.

Meanwhile, 10 feet away, my son was dying, and there was nothing I could do about it. I was powerless to save my only son.

If this tragedy can happen to my family, it could happen to anyone's family. Doctors tell me that I'm going to have medical problems for the rest of my life because of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning. But I feel I got off easy. Though Susie and I may have to live with this tragedy, we're still here. And as long as we're here, we are going to tell people about Tom and how easily his life could have been saved.

And while Tom died while vacationing out of state, it could just as easily have happened in Traverse City or Harbor Springs or Mackinaw Island, because Michigan does not require CO detectors in hotel rooms, or, for that matter, in new homes. Until this tragedy happened, we did not have CO detection in our own home.

I would like to address the parallel need in residential homes also, as I believe legislation will soon be introduced which focuses on new residential construction. New construction in particular is built to be very tight, magnifying the risks of CO exposure, and on the residential side, if you think such things are not a concern here in Michigan, I would like to share a brief new story with you. Last Friday, October 19th, 38 people were evacuated and 8 people were hospitalized while in their Grand Rapids condominiums.

Yes it can happen, and it does happen right here in Michigan.

This is a carbon monoxide detector. It costs about \$25 dollars.

It represents how easily preventable Tom's death was.

Please, we urge you as parents that have lost a son, whatever laws you may vote on or advocate this year, make CO detection a personal priority. Pass this law for the people of Michigan, for those who vacation here and for the memory of our son Tom.

Thank you again Ms. Chairwoman and members of the committee for allowing us to speak today.

